



State of Tennessee Department of Children's Services

Administrative Policies and Procedures: 1.14

Subject: News Media Relations in Regional and Field Services

Supersedes: DCS 1.14, 04/01/03

Local Policy: No

Local Procedures: No

Training Required: No

Applicable Practice Model Standard(s): No

Approved by:

Effective date: 05/15/97

Revision date: 07/01/05

Application

To All Department of Children's Services Regional and Field Services Employees

Authority: TCA 37-5-101, 37-5-102, 37-5-106

Policy

Representatives of the news media shall be permitted limited access to Department of Children's Services offices subject to restrictions as outlined in this policy.

Procedures

A. Public information program This policy and the local policies submitted to central office from all regional and field locations serve as the Public Information Program.

B. Information available to the media

1. Authorization required

The Departmental Public Information Officer (PIO) must be notified and their authorization obtained during and after working hours before any statement confirming information may be released to the media.

2. News releases

News releases must be disseminated only through the PIO or by advance approval from the PIO.

C. Contact with the media**1. Limits of contact**

The PIO or authorized designee is the only DCS employees authorized to interact with the media.

2. Report of contact

Any DCS employee other than the PIO who talks with the news media must immediately report such contact to the PIO.

3. Evaluation of media requests for contact

Requests for media contact will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis that are determined by the right or need to know.

D. Approval from Departmental Public Information Officer

1. Each Regional Administrator must notify the appropriate Executive Director and receive approval from the PIO of the designated contact person(s) in each office.
2. The Regional Administrator must identify areas in the DCS offices that are accessible to media representatives and inform the PIO.

E. Child/youth interviews**1. Determination**

Requests for interviews with children/youth are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. No interview will be granted that is deemed to be detrimental to the child/youth.

2. Rights of children/youth

Interviews are voluntary. The child/youth has the right not to be interviewed, photographed, or recorded by the media.

3. Release by parent(s)/guardian

- a) If the media requests to interview, record, or photograph a child/youth in DCS custody, the assigned case manager must obtain a release form *CS-0559, Authorization For Release of Child-Specific Information From DCS and Contract Service Providers*, signed by the child/youth and the parent(s) or guardian of the child/youth prior to allowing the child/youth to be

interviewed, recorded, or photographed.

- b) If a youth is over the age of eighteen (18) and is in state custody, the parental consent is not required and the youth may consent and sign the release.
- c) If parental consent is required and if the parents or guardians are not known or their addresses are unknown and cannot be located, the Regional Administrator or designees may at his/her discretion, with the approval of the appropriate Executive Director authorize the release of information.
- d) In all other circumstances, parental permission must be in writing and will be necessary in order for any media interview or release of information.
- d) If a parent or guardian objects to the interview or photograph being released through the media, then the Regional Administrator or designees shall not have any discretion and any information and photographs from the interview shall not be released. The appropriate section on form *CS-0559, Authorization For Release of Child-Specific Information From DCS and Contract Service Providers*, shall be signed if there are objections to the interview or photographs being released to the media.
- e) Signed releases must become part of the child/youth's case file.

F. Interviews with staff

1. Voluntary

Personal interviews with staff members must be granted voluntarily.

2. Approval required

Any staff member wishing to grant an interview regarding DCS must obtain approval in advance from the appropriate Executive Director and the PIO

G. Policy violation

Violation of this policy may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Forms

CS-0559 Authorization For Release of Child-Specific Information From the
Department of Children's Services and Contract Service Providers

Collateral Documents

None

Standards

None